



27. The Bremen Town Musicians

Once there was a donkey who had worked long and hard for his master. Now he had grown weak and could not do much work. So, his master began to treat him unkindly. He even began to starve the donkey. He wanted to save the money he spent on the donkey's food. In the end, the poor donkey left the house. He believed he still had a good strong singing voice. So he decided to go to Bremen town and earn his living as a town musician.

On the way, he met an old dog. He, too, had been kicked out of the house by a cruel master. The dog was afraid. "How will I earn my bread?" he said.

"Why, you have a voice as good as mine," said the donkey. "Let us both go to Bremen and sing for the townspeople. We shall be well paid there." So the two companions went on together.

Suddenly, they heard a cat mewling sadly with tears in his voice. "Why are you crying?" they asked.



"How can I be happy knowing that my mistress is going to drown me? I am old and would only like to sit by the fire and sleep. I cannot catch mice as I did before. So my mistress does not need me anymore. Where am I to go?"

"Come with us to Bremen. You have a sweet voice and you know night music. You too can be a town musician," said the donkey.

Now the three travelled together for some time till they came upon a farmyard. There they heard a cock's loud wailing. When they made enquiries, the cock told them, "My mistress is preparing

a feast for her guests. She has told the cook to kill me for the feast. I am so frightened !” So the donkey invited the cock, too, to join the band of musicians.

Bremen was still a long way away. On the way, they had to cross a forest. As it began to get dark, the cock flew to the top of a tree to look around for shelter. He saw an old house among the trees. The four friends decided to rest there for the night.

It was quite dark by the time they reached the house. Through the window, they saw some robbers feasting at a large table inside. The animals had a clever idea. Why not give their first performance here? The robbers would be so pleased that they would happily share their food with the four musicians. They might even pay them for their performance !

So the donkey placed his forelegs on the window ledge. The dog jumped on the donkey’s back and the cat on the dog’s. The cock perched on the cat’s head. Then all at once and all together they began to sing their wonderful song.

Strangely, the music only frightened the robbers. They only heard a terrible noise and saw the huge shadow cast by the animals together. They sprang from the table and taking to their heels, disappeared into the forest. The four friends were puzzled. But they gladly sat down at the table and had a hearty dinner. Then they put out the light and went to sleep – the donkey on the straw in the





yard, the cat near the stove, the dog on the doormat and the cock on the beam of the roof.

Now, the robbers had not gone very far. Their leader saw the house become dark and quiet. So he sent a man to see if it was safe to go back to the house. The robbers had kept all their stolen riches in that house and wanted them back.

The man went into the house on tiptoe. He saw the cat's eyes and thought they were burning coals. He tried to pick up one to light his candle. But it frightened the cat. The angry cat flew at him and scratched his face. This frightened the robber. He turned to run out of the house.

As he ran, the dog on the doormat bit his leg hard. He stumbled and fell on the donkey. The donkey, woken up suddenly, gave the robber a smart kick with his hind legs. And all this while the cock had been screaming, 'Cock-a-doodle-dooo.....' in his ears and flapping his wings around his head. The robber nearly died of fright.

Somehow he got back to his gang. In a trembling voice, he told them that the house was full of monsters and deadly creatures who bit and scratched and kicked and attacked you in the dark.



So the robbers never went back to the house. The four friends found enough money in the house to live on there, in happiness and comfort. That is why, the musicians never went to Bremen.

Things to do :

1. Answer the following questions in short :

- (a) Who were the musicians ?
- (b) Did the musicians belong to Bremen town ?
- (c) Why did the donkey have to leave his master's house ?
- (d) Why were the following unhappy –
 - (a) the dog (b) the cat (c) the cock ?
- (e) Was the donkey good-hearted ?

How do we know that ?

- (f) Was the idea of singing to the robbers really clever ?
- (g) What effect did the musicians' singing have ?



2. Tell what happened to the robber who went back to the house.

3. Write the opposites of :

- * starve * cruel * sadly * loud
- * huge * hind legs * happiness

4. Write an imaginary conversation among the four musicians living in the house in the forest.

